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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 002697

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DEPARTMENT FOR AF/SPG, AF/SE, AF/RSA, AND EUR/WE
NSC FOR PITTMAN AND SHORTLEY
PARIS FOR D'ELIA

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [SU](#) [FR](#) [CD](#)
SUBJECT: DESPITE OPTICS ON FM VISIT, NO NEW FRENCH
INITIATIVE FOR DARFUR

REF: KHARTOUM 02671

Classified By: P/E Chief E. Whitaker, Reason: Sections 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: Despite the positive coverage in both the Western and Sudanese press of French Foreign Minister Philippe Douste-Blazy's recent trip to Khartoum and reports of a French initiative to resolve the Darfur crisis, French Political Counselor Francois Colas characterized the visit as an unsuccessful attempt by the Sudanese government to lure the GoF away from its Western allies and divide the international community on United Nations intervention in Darfur. He denied the existence of a new French peace initiative. Noting French concern that the Darfur crisis could result in a wider regional war, Colas said his government would continue to encourage the Sudanese leadership to accept international forces in Darfur, reign in Chadian rebel leaders, and press Darfur rebel leaders to develop a more unified leadership structure. End summary.

French objectives unclear despite Sudanese flirtations

12. (C) During a November 16 meeting with Poloff, Colas said that the Sudanese government had used Douste-Blazy's November 12-13 visit to court the French government in an effort to lure it away from its Western allies and lessen its support for UN intervention in Darfur. This approach was part of an ongoing Sudanese strategy toward France that included NCP insider Ghazi Salaheddin's October visit to Paris and Presidential Advisor and former Foreign Minister Mustafa Osman Ismail's planned trip from November 16 to 19. Colas could not articulate what the French government had hoped to achieve with Douste-Blazy's visit to Khartoum, indicating that it is unlikely to expend much political capital to resolve the crisis. He said only that his government was unswayed by "Sudanese flattery" on the important role that Paris could play in a resolution of the crisis and that a purported French initiative for Darfur did not exist.

The Chadian Question

13. (C) Colas noted the French government's concern that the Darfur conflict could broaden into a wider war involving Chad and the Central African Republic. He said that some factions of the Sudanese government had expressed similar concerns during their meetings with Douste-Blazy and asked for French assistance in facilitating a rapprochement between Sudan and Chad. Colas, however, said that hard-liners in both the Sudanese and Chadian governments were obstructing such a

reconciliation despite French pressure on both sides to reign in rebel groups. "You cannot convince those that are not ready to be convinced," he stated, noting that Sudan continued to harbor most of the Chadian rebel leaders that it had promised to expel following the normalization of relations between Sudan and Chad in July.

¶4. (C) Contradicting press reports that President Bashir would consider supporting international "observers" on the Chadian side of the border, Colas said that this idea was not raised during Douste-Blazy's meeting with Bashir and that other Sudanese officials had been "non-responsive" on the issue. Colas attributed this to the hard-liners' belief that international forces in Chad would be a way for the United Nations to "sneak into Sudan through the backdoor." (Note: Given the Sudanese government's mixed messages following the November 16 agreement in Addis Ababa (covered septel), it is difficult to determine if the government's attitude on international observers in Chad has changed. End note.)

DPA Non-signatories

¶5. (C) Regarding the non-signatories to the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA), Colas said his government was skeptical about a Justice Africa initiative, funded by the European Commission, for a conference of rebel leaders. He added that the "USG initiative" to support a conference of non-signatory commanders and promote a more coherent leadership structure within the movements would be more productive and said he did not understand why the European Commission had chosen Justice Africa as its partner, given that it had no permanent presence in Sudan. (Note: In using the term "USG

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initiative," Colas was referring to the joint USG, UK, Dutch, and Norwegian working group that has been engaging rebel commanders and is working to facilitate a conference in Birmaza in the coming days (reftel). Prior to Colas' comments, French representatives had not raised any concerns about the EC/Justice Africa plan during numerous meetings of the international community in Khartoum. End note.)

¶6. (C) Noting SLM leader Abdulwahid Al Nur's upcoming trip to Paris, Colas said the French government would use the opportunity to underscore the importance of unifying the rebel movements in order to enhance their bargaining position with the Sudanese government. He said that the GoF would cite the example of the successful Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement. Reformulating the refrain of "divide and rule," Colas said the Sudanese government's policy was "divide and survive," which would remain effective until the rebel movements could develop a more unified leadership structure.
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